

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS



Newsletter of the N.H. Department of Environmental Services

March/April 2002

FROM THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Earth Day 2002 Reflections

by Dana Bisbee,
DES Assistant
Commissioner

We all
recogn-
nize

New Hampshire's
special natural
blessings; we en-
joy the benefit of
clean air and
clean water in
our daily lives,

and appreciate the beauty that this state affords. We also are becoming increasingly aware of the depth and breadth of the benefits provided by New Hampshire's natural environment, recognizing more and more that it plays an essential role in our quality of life and economic well-being.

The arrival of Earth Day this year gives us another occasion to reflect upon the significance of our natural environment, and the importance of the efforts of each of us in continuing to improve environmental quality in this state. While it is self-evident that the laws enacted by our Legislature play a critical role in environmental management, we must recognize that the citizens of this state – in their homes, at work, in their communities, through civic organizations – make the difference. The choices in our daily lives on what we purchase, our electricity and water use, and how we manage our waste materials all affect the ecology of our state and our air and water quality. We are the stewards of our natural resources.

One of the more significant responsibilities of the Department of Environmental Services is to recognize, reward, and replicate the outstanding efforts of New Hampshire's environmental stewards. While there are countless examples of how New Hampshire citizens are succeeding at preserving and enhancing our natural environment, I want to highlight two recent programs as examples. One is featured in this issue of *Environmental News* — the Granite State Clean Cars Program. New Hampshire car buyers can now walk into a participating auto dealership's lot and tell quickly which cars qualify as low-polluting, high miles-per-gallon vehicles. By looking for a specially-designed



State declares drought emergency

After reviewing the latest data on precipitation, stream flows, lake levels, soil moisture, and groundwater wells, the N.H. Drought Management Team recently elevated its official classification of New Hampshire's low water conditions to a Drought Emergency for all but the state's northernmost county, Coos County. The Emergency designation is the third level in a four-tier classification system established in the State's Drought Management Plan. Since the Plan was created a decade ago, no low-water conditions have ever before progressed beyond the Level Two, Drought Warning, stage.

"The emergency designation reflects a situation in which mandatory water conservation measures should be strongly considered by public water suppliers, as appropriate," explained Dana Bisbee, DES Assistant Commissioner. Though public water suppliers already have the authority to issue water use restrictions at any time that they determine it necessary, and several municipal suppliers have now done so, the State's official emergency designation serves to reinforce the severity of the situation from a broader, state level. Based as it is on measured data and objective criteria, the State's emergency classification provides public water suppliers with additional justification for

DROUGHT

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requiring any water use restrictions.

To assist municipal officials, DES drafted a model ordinance for towns and cities that wish to issue water use restrictions. The ordinance is available on DES's web site.

Bisbee also noted that Coos County remains at a Drought Warning (Level 2) classification due to the more normal precipitation amounts there in recent months. "As elsewhere in the state, public water suppliers in the county retain the option of adopting water use restrictions if they deem it necessary."

The N.H. Drought Management Team, which has been meeting regularly, consists of representatives from various state agencies, as well as other groups.

The Team's decision to categorize the drought as an Emergency is predicated on various parameters. Rain and snowfall data, for example, show that over the past twelve months cumulative precipitation has been only about 75 percent of normal in most parts of the state south of Coos County. Also, some reservoirs are showing substantially lower levels, and groundwater is still very low statewide, with about two-thirds of the state's monitoring wells classified as having below-normal water levels.

Further, "soil and forest fuel moisture levels are such that forest fires are an increasing likelihood this year if conditions don't change," said Bud Nelson, Chief of the Forest Protection Bureau for the N.H. Department of Resources and Economic Development. Nelson is urging people to be aware of the forest fire danger and to exercise caution with outdoor activities and the disposal of smoking materials and woodstove ashes.



New Hampshire's worst drought in nearly forty years is leaving many lakes and rivers across the state with exposed bottomlands. Here, DES Water Resources Engineer Jim Gallagher views low water conditions at Concord's public water supply reservoir.

People are also being urged to take steps to conserve water at their homes and places of work. "It's surprising how much water can be saved even with small life-style changes and minor modifications," said Harry Stewart, Director of DES's Water Division. "For example, taking shorter showers and using washing machines only with full loads can help greatly. Repairing just one leaky faucet can save up to 4,000 gallons per month. And now that outdoor water use is coming with the warmer weather, there are a number of lawn-watering, gardening, and car washing practices that will help conserve water as well."

DES has a number of water conservation fact sheets with tips for homeowners and specific businesses. Visit www.des.state.nh.us, and under "Hot Topics" click "Water Conservation," or call DES's Public Information Office at 271-2975 for copies of

these fact sheets. For more detailed information on the New Hampshire drought situation, including specific water data from around the state, visit DES's web site and click "Drought Management." ■

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Nashua's Whitney Screw property cleaned *Successful brownfields project celebrated*

The first loan agreement under DES's Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (BCRLF) program was signed recently by developers Peter Smith and Dean Jackson, of Smith Jackson, LLC. This \$189,000 loan will assist with cleanup costs for the former Whitney Screw site in Nashua. The redevelopment will provide expanded facilities for two local businesses, Goodale's Bike and Outdoor Power.

This success is the outcome of the cooperation and commitment of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the City of Nashua, DES, and Smith Jackson, LLC.

The City of Nashua began the redevelopment process with the Broad Street Redevelopment Corridor Initiative, involving 95 acres near a major new arterial street that will connect the primary highway in the area to the downtown. The new road will provide access and visibility to a number of older, contaminated industrial properties, including the former Whitney Screw property. In 1999, the city applied for and received \$200,000 to fund a Brownfields As-

essment Demonstration Pilot to prioritize and conduct assessments of sites within the BSRC.

The 5.4-acre former Whitney Screw site abuts a mix of residential properties and businesses, as well as an active rail corridor. Historical use of the property involved a variety of industrial activities under a series of ownerships beginning in the early 1900s. Whitney Screw's plating room operations ceased in April 1985. Currently, a one-story warehouse complex consisting of twelve attached structures spans the site.

Smith Jackson, LLC plans to spend an additional \$2 million on improvements to demolish approximately 20,000 sq.ft. of the existing warehouse complex and to renovate approximately 50,280 sq.ft. of building space.

DES has worked diligently to help ensure the success of this Brownfields project. Special credit goes to Gary Lynn, Mike Wimsatt, and project manager Joyce Bledsoe. For more information on DES's Brownfields program, please call (603) 271-2900. ■

What is New Hampshire's Brownfields Program?

New Hampshire RSA 147-F, which became effective July 1, 1996, establishes a program to encourage the voluntary cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated properties, i.e., "brownfields." Brownfields are typically properties that have been underutilized or abandoned due to environmental contamination. Historically, prospective new owners, financial institutions, and municipalities have avoided involvement with these properties due to potential liability for existing environmental contamination, typically caused by former site owners or operators. This contributes to the urban blight created by abandoned industrial properties, and leads to the unnecessary industrial development of pristine "greenfields," such as farms and forest lands.

New Hampshire's Brownfields Program is designed to provide incentives for both environmental cleanup and redevelopment by persons who did not cause the contamination. This is accomplished under a process by which eligible persons can obtain a "covenant not to sue" from the N.H. Department of Justice and a "certificate of completion" from DES when investigations and cleanups are performed in accordance with DES cleanup requirements.

Essentially, any person who did not cause the existing contamination at the property is eligible. This may include prospective purchasers, current property owners if they did not cause or contribute to the contamination, secured creditors or mortgage holders, or municipalities owed real estate taxes on the property. ■



Celebrating the site redevelopment are (from left) Peter Smith, site developer; Brad Hill, Goodale Bike Shop owner; Dean Jackson, site developer; Mayor Bernard Streeter; Joyce Bledsoe, DES project manager; and Robert Varney, EPA Region I Administrator.

Buying a “cleaner” car just got easier



A new voluntary car-labeling program that makes it easier for consumers to identify less polluting, more fuel-efficient new cars on dealer lots was recently launched. The new program, called the *Granite State Clean Cars* program, was developed through a unique public/private partnership, which includes DES, the N.H. Automobile Dealers Association, the American Lung Association of N.H., the Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Department of Transportation.

The *Granite State Clean Cars* initiative is a voluntary program for dealers who sell new cars in New Hampshire. Participating dealers will be affixing a *Clean Cars* sticker to new vehicles that meet certain criteria for emission levels and fuel economy. To qualify for the label designed specifically for this program, the vehicle must have a highway fuel economy rating of at least 30 miles per gallon and be classified as one of a category of “low emissions vehicles.”

“There are more than sixty-four different makes and models of vehicles that qualify for the *Clean Cars* label,” said Dan McLeod, President of the N.H. Auto Dealers Association. “Consumers have many vehicles to choose from that will meet their driving needs.”

New vehicle dealers were invited to participate in the voluntary program beginning in November 2001. Across the state, many dealers have signed up. New car shoppers can check the left rear driver’s side window for the *Clean Cars* sticker, or ask their dealers to identify cars and trucks with higher fuel economy and lower emissions.

In conveying support for the new clean car initiative, Governor Shaheen said, “Fuel efficient cars cut down on air pollution and make us less dependent on foreign oil. This new program is a smart way of encouraging people to purchase fuel efficient cars.”

For more information contact Kathy Brockett, DES, at (800) 498-6868, or Brendan Perry at the N.H. Auto Dealers Association, (800) 852-3372. ■



Participating dealerships represented at a recent press conference include (from left) Peggy Proko, Peters Honda in Nashua; Jeff Platek, Betley Chevrolet in Derry; Matt Shramek, Allen Motors in Derry; and Gary Branyen, Ron Currier’s Hilltop Chevrolet in Somersworth.

Grandfathering period set to expire for N. H. geologist licensing

Professional geologists practicing in New Hampshire have until June 30 to apply for a professional geologist license under the current grandfathering period. After June 30, candidates will have to pass the National Association of State Boards of Geology exams before receiving a license. New Hampshire geologists were given twelve months from July 1, 2001 to apply for a license without meeting the exam requirements.



According to the New Hampshire Council of Professional Geologists’ web site, twenty-seven states have enacted legislation regarding certification or licensing of professional geologists. Both classifications demand “demonstrated levels of education, experience, competence through the passing of an examination, and ethical conduct.” While certification is voluntary, licensing is mandatory for geologists to practice their profession within the state.

At press time, the N.H. Joint Board of Licensure was still accepting applications for the remaining grandfather period. Detailed licensing requirements and an application form can be found on the Joint Board of Licensure web site at www.state.nh.us/jtboard/geo.htm, or by calling the Joint Board at (603) 271-2219 or e-mailing dlobdell@nhsa.state.nh.us. ■



Manchester and DES announce environmental health council

Mayor Robert Baines and DES Assistant Commissioner Dana Bisbee recently announced the formation of an environmental health leadership council to examine the city's environmental health issues. The council will be charged with maintaining and improving the communication between the State and local governments, as well as looking at the Manchester environment in a proactive manner.

"It's simply not enough to look at pollution sources and correct the ones that we find. As a community, we have to work to ensure that the community environment will continue to be one that improves and preserves the public health, in order that a high quality of life can be enjoyed by Manchester residents," said Baines.

It was noted that DES was instrumental in devising the plan. Bisbee commented, "DES welcomes this opportunity to work closely with Manchester towards improving the community's environment.

Through this work, we also hope to develop a model that can be used in other communities in the state."

The Environmental Health Leadership Council will develop and implement strategies to address environmental problems specific to Manchester. It will also coordinate



Gathered to initiate the Manchester Environmental Health Leadership Council are, from left, Rosemay Caron, of the Manchester Health Department (MHD); Carl DeLoi, USEPA; Cheryl Fortier, DES; Fred Rusczyk, MHD; Manchester Mayor Robert A. Baines; DES Assistant Commissioner Dana Bisbee; Bob Scott, DES; Tim Soucy, MHD; and Rick Rumba, DES.

environmental compliance, enforcement, and education, and it will monitor environmentally-related health concerns. Co-chaired by the Manchester Health Department and DES, the Council will include representatives from businesses, academia, and the medical community. ■

Ski areas join environmentalists in "Sustainable Slopes" Charter

In late February, ski resorts in New Hampshire and across the country kicked off a new, far-reaching voluntary environmental initiative, which addresses all aspects of resort operation. This includes environmental planning and design, water and energy use, habitat and forest management, and waste management. One hundred and sixty areas, representing 70 percent of the country's skier/snow-boarder visits have currently endorsed the "Environmental Charter for Ski Areas." The charter provides a framework for ski resorts to implement best management practices, assess environmental performances, and set goals for improvement.

"DES has been working with WasteCap/New Hampshire to help three of the state's major ski areas address their solid waste issues," said Pierce Rigrod of DES's Waste Management Division. He explained that Bretton Woods, Loon Mountain, and Gunstock each participated in a "solid waste audit," which involved sorting, weighing, or estimating the volume of the solid waste materials generated by the facility in one day. Typically, the waste stream of each of the audited facilities contains large amounts of polystyrene cups, plates, cardboard/mixed paper, as well as plastic, aluminum, and glass beverage con-

tainers—most of which is generated from the various food service providers. Following the audits, DES has been working with ski areas to find ways to further reduce and/or recycle their wastes.

"Several efforts are in the works to reduce solid waste before it is generated," noted Rigrod. "Loon Mountain plans to remove its cardboard food trays—which cost 10¢ per tray—and replace them with reusable plastic trays. Bretton Woods uses a variety of washable dishes and cups. And Gunstock is looking into the option of grinding glass from beverage containers and using it on roads to replace fill."

From using energy-efficient snowmakers to practicing recycling programs, New Hampshire ski resorts are continuing to look for ways to reduce the impact on the environment and continue a tradition of responsible stewardship. The Sustainable Slopes Charter helps provide the framework from which resorts can implement sound environmental practices.

To find out more about the Sustainable Slopes Charter, go to the National Ski Areas Association's web site at www.nsaa.org. For more information on waste reduction for businesses in New Hampshire, contact Pierce Rigrod, DES, at (603) 271-3713, or go to www.des.state.nh.us/pcas. ■

Wetlands permit program streamlined; backlogs reduced

Ensuring the protection of New Hampshire's valuable wetlands resources is one of DES's major responsibilities under the State's water statutes. Since the 1960s, all work in wetlands – dredging, filling, dock building, and other activities – requires a state permit. Given the volume and complexity of permit applications that come before DES, it is an on-going challenge for DES to review these applications in as timely manner as it would like. Because backlogs occur, concerns understandably arise.

To address this, in recent years DES has taken a number of steps, both organizationally and procedurally. Several reorganizations have gone a long way toward creating an internal structure conducive for timely and effective permitting. In 1996, at DES's request, the Legislature consolidated DES's two water divisions into one. "This integration facilitated better internal coordination of water programs," explained Harry Stewart, Director of DES's Water Division. "Notably, DES's wetlands, subsurface systems, and erosion control programs are now under one division. A further legislative action reconstituted the former Wetlands Board into the N.H. Wetlands Council. The Council now serves the same appeals role as all the department's other councils, and DES's Wetlands Bureau now has direct permitting authority, further enhancing its efficiency."

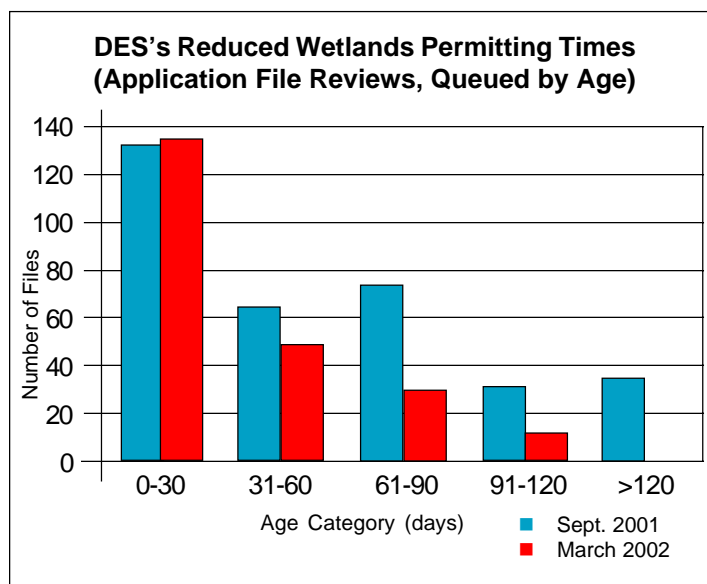
Stewart noted that the Legislature's water programs consolidation allowed DES to take another reorganization step. "In 1999, DES placed five closely-related programs under one Water Division program, the Land Resources Management Program. This again facilitates better integration of permitting, inspections, and compliance for all these programs."



To further streamline wetlands permitting, new DES rules were recently adopted establishing a permit-by-notification process for minimum impact seasonal docks, drilling for municipal wells, and geotechnical exploration for public projects. Also, DES has proposed rules creating permits-by-notification for routine highway and railway maintenance. Further, a "minimum impact notification" working group is now identifying additional projects (like culverts and bridge maintenance) that can be approved under a simple notification process. Moreover, DES adopted new streamlined rules for breakwaters, and recently proposed DES "lifetime maintenance" rules will allow the maintenance of same-ownership structures without the need for a new wetlands permit. DES's proposed wetlands mitigation rules will also serve to clarify and streamline its permitting process.

There are several bills now before the New Hampshire House and Senate that would also enhance the wetlands permitting process even further. "Of particular note is HB 1343," said Stewart. "This bill will impose mandatory review times for wetlands applications. Also, through an increase in application fees, this would help DES maintain a full complement of wetlands permitting staff and maintain a high level of staff technical expertise. Permit backlog reductions would continue to take place with full staffing," expressed Stewart.

Lastly, DES is hard at work on finalizing its Wetlands Bureau Management Strategy. The strategy includes new workload allocation procedures, proposed rules, staffing matters, and increased public outreach activities. "Implementing this formal strategy, with its goals and target deadlines," said Stewart, "will further foster improved permit timeliness, efficiency, and effectiveness. We look forward to gaining input on our wetlands strategy from all our stakeholders." ■



DES supports new training program for public works employees

The public works field encompasses a variety of management areas, including solid waste, drinking water, and wastewater. Many public works jobs require certification and licensing, but coordinated training was missing—until now. Thanks to the vision of one man and the efforts of many to see that vision come to fruition, the New Hampshire Public Works Standards and Training Council was born.

Carl Quiram, P.E., Goffstown Director of Public Works, first came up with the vision of a standardized training program for New Hampshire after hearing a presentation on Florida's public works academy, which provides comprehensive basic public works training and prepares people for a career in public works.

At Quiram's initiative, a committee was formed in June of 2000 "to develop and maintain a voluntary standard of training for all aspects of the public works profession." Committee members included public works directors and road agents from large and small municipalities, and representatives from the N.H. Municipal Association, DES, N.H. Department of Transportation, UNH's Technology Transfer Center, New England Waterworks Association, and N.H. Prime Risk Management Exchange (Primex).

The committee identified training goals for public works employees and developed a series of training curricula. In addition, the group developed by-laws and operating rules for a new standards and training council that would oversee the program. Operating under the auspices of the New Hampshire Municipal Association, the Council is non-profit organization with a board of directors of thirteen members.



DES Assistant Commissioner Dana Bisbee (left) congratulates Carl Quiram for his leadership in creating the N.H. Public Works Academy.

"Public works activities can often have a huge impact on the environment," said DES Assistant Commissioner Dana Bisbee. "We fully support this collaborative effort to educate and reward those who work hard to maintain and improve New Hampshire's municipal facilities."

During 2002, the Academy will offer training in the Seacoast area and in the North Country. For more information, please contact Lori Hubbard at the New Hampshire Municipal Association, (603) 224-7447 ext. 107, or write the Council c/o NHMA, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord, NH 03301. ■

DES's new Water Supply Capacity Program

Ensuring safe, reliable public drinking water

What steps can a public water system take to help ensure that it provides an adequate quantity of high quality drinking water to its customers? That is the focus of a new program at DES, headed up by Jim Hewitt, P.E.

In his role as Capacity Development Coordinator, Jim is responsible for assisting public water suppliers, especially small suppliers, meet the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. "Specifically, I assist the owners and operators of interested systems and help them acquire the technical, managerial, and financial capabilities to meet their needs."

Jim notes that the term "capacity development" and "capacity assurance" when used in the public drinking water field are not related to volume or competence, but rather toward ability. "Capacity development" can be thought of as a voluntary process through which a system plans and implements its activities to ensure that a water system can meet both its immediate and long-term obligations to provide safe and reliable drinking water.

Jim explained that capacity activities are categorized into three groups. "Technical capacity" refers to the physical infrastructure of the water system and addresses questions such as: Is the system's source adequate to provide sufficient water over the long term? Are the treatment, storage, and distribution systems adequate? Do the system's personnel have the requisite technical knowledge? "Managerial capacity" includes such aspects as staffing and organizational structure. And "financial capacity" refers to revenue sufficiency and fiscal controls.

Created through recently adopted administrative rules, DES's new Water Supply Capacity Program can also be thought of as an information and assistance clearinghouse to help troubled small water systems with other DES water supply programs, such as permitting and operator certification. "My role," explained Hewitt, "is to help water systems that want to help themselves."

For more information on this program, people may call Jim Hewitt at (603) 271-3108. ■

Rollingsford and Hopkinton WWTFs receive EPA honors *Tom White wins individual recognition award*

Each year, EPA Region I honors outstanding wastewater treatment facilities in New England for their commitment to improving water quality and effective plant management. New Hampshire facilities took two of only four New England Regional Operations and Maintenance Excellence Awards presented this year. Hopkinton and Rollingsford received recognition for the exceptional efforts of their municipal wastewater treatment facility operators. At the same ceremony, Tom White of DES's Wastewater Engineering Bureau received the Peloquin Award for his outstanding contributions to the wastewater field.

The Rollingsford facility was singled out as the "Most Improved Treatment Plant" in New England, an award that is shared with the Operations Section of the DES Wastewater Engineering Bureau. DES staff members Wes Ripple, George Neill, and Tom White were cited for their

on-site technical assistance to the plant. Only last year, the Town of Lisbon and the DES Operations staff received the same award.

In addition to the EPA awards, Tom White received NEWEA's Peloquin Award. This annual

award is given to an individual in each of the six New England states who has shown a high level of interest and performance in the wastewater field. ■



*Tom White receives
NEWEA's Peloquin
Award.*

EARTHDAY

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sticker affixed to the car's window, now on 64 makes and models at 24 participating dealerships, individuals can take an important step towards ensuring cleaner air.

A second example is the Clean Marine Engine Initiative, under which some 34 marine dealers entered into a proactive strategy to accelerate the sale and use of low-pollution, outboard marine engines in the State of New Hampshire. The sales of these newer and much cleaner engines – which have far exceeded our goals – have substantially reduced exhaust emissions, increased fuel efficiency, and released far less gasoline and oil directly to our surface waters. I congratulate and com-

mend all of the participating dealers in these highly successful, voluntary programs.

We extend to all an invitation to attend the various events and activities on and after April 22 to commemorate Earth Day. These include tours and open houses sponsored and co-hosted by DES at a variety of environmentally oriented facilities – air monitoring stations, wastewater treatment plants, and a host of other sites.

Please visit our website at www.des.state.nh.us. We've posted these events under *Earth Day/Every Day*, recognizing that every day, indeed, does provide each of us an opportunity to do our small, but vital, part in protecting our environment. ■



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